

Media Release

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Research commercialisation stars shine at the nabCapital awards

Four Monash University postgraduate students have been named as recipients of the 2008 nabCapital Science in Business Awards.

The students, Benjamin Fohner, Elizabeth Chisholm, Shiao Tan and Ben Yeo were recognised for their research commercialisation projects undertaken as part of a Master of Business (Science & Technology) at the Asia Pacific Centre for Science and Wealth Creation at Monash University.

Each student received \$10,000 in prize money, donated by nabCapital.

As part of the unique course, science graduates obtain the business, economics, legal and management acumen required to commercialise leading-edge medical, scientific and technological research.

Subjects include law, patents and marketing, but unlike other courses, the aspiring entrepreneurs also got hands-on experience, being assigned to work alongside some of Monash's elite teams of researchers to develop real commercialisation plans for emerging research.

Professor Edwina Cornish, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) said she was extremely impressed by the high standard of projects produced by the winning students.

"These students have successfully put the skills that they have gained from this degree to a practical and commercially viable use," said Professor Cornish.

"Research can be of little benefit to the community if it remains locked within the university. Innovation is only made accessible to the people who need it when it is out in the marketplace."

The winning students worked closely with researchers and industry to develop commercialisation deals for the following innovations:

- **Water splitting solar cell:** The invention uses sunlight to break water into hydrogen and oxygen producing electricity in a process similar to photosynthesis. The hydrogen can be used for power (e.g. hydrogen cars) or converted back to electricity producing clean water. It also has potential for desalination.
- **Efficient production of plasmid DNA vaccines:** This invention, currently being reviewed by a number of international companies, provides a means of rapidly and efficiently producing large quantities of plasmid DNA vaccines, an emerging vaccine technology with potential for vaccination against pandemics and diseases such as malaria. It is already being used in the development of an experimental malaria vaccine at Monash.
- **Treatment for Facioscapulohumeral Muscular Dystrophy (FSHD):** This is the third most common form of muscular dystrophy and is highly debilitating. The research is funded by a Foundation set up by former Macquarie banker, Bill Moss. The students worked on patenting and commercialisation strategies for the research.

Professor Cornish congratulated award recipients and thanked nabCapital for their continued support and encouragement in developing Australia's future research innovators.

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